Advocate for Your Loved Ones

*Velma Betz*

When my son was in high school, I had to advocate for him, because the high school did not supply him with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

My son was born with a disability. His development was slow. He had a learning disability and a speech impediment. They put him in Early Childhood Development classes.

I had to go to the special education office and the Principal’s office. Finally, I had to file a complaint with the Los Angeles School District, Division of Special Education.

It was hard. I had to fill out papers and send them to different people. I had to get help from my daughter. It took us three weeks to fill out all the paperwork! I got a lot of resistance from his teachers and the principal.

Then, at last, I got a positive reply. I got my son all the things he was supposed to get. I felt good. I think my son felt good about what I did for him. My son is now 31.

This experience taught me how to advocate for myself and my family. Now, I am pursuing a career in advocacy.

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**What barriers does Velma face?** What does she do address the problem? Discuss in a small group. Share a time you have had to advocate for your child. How did it go? What did you learn from the experience? Read Lupe’s story on p. 32. What is the same and what is different about the challenges these two moms have faced? Create a Venn diagram to organize your analysis.